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STATE OF MONTANA
DIVISION OF FORENSIC SCIENCE
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
275 West Front Street, Missoula, MT 59802 (406) 728-4970

Ronald L. Rivers, M.D.
State Medical Examiner

Arnold B. Melnikoff
Laboratory Bureau Chief

Dawn M. Kangas
Administrative Assistant

SHELVED WITH
PERIODICALS

OCTOBER 1983

RAVALLI COUNTY DEATH INVESTIGATION SEMINAR

October 4th and 5th - Hamilton

Open to law enforcement, coroners, attorneys, firefighters and health personnel.

MLEA credit - Register through Ravalli County Sheriffs Office
Phone: 363-3033

OLD BULLETS

A 21 year-old male recently had a bullet surgically removed from his neck in Montana. It has been there for three years. Does this have to be reported? Yes!

MCA 37-2-302 states "The physician, nurse, or other person licensed to practice a health care profession treating the victim of a gunshot wound or stabbing shall made a report to a law enforcement officer by the fastest possible means. Within 24 hours after initial treatment or first observation of the wound, a written report shall be submitted, including the name and address of the victim, if known, and shall be sent by regular mail."

TIME WASTER

We recently received two tubes of blood and a tube of vitreous with blank labels, no seals, a blank request form and no postmark. Hope this wasn't your case!

ALCOHOL KITS

Our test tube order was late causing a short supply. Anyone needing these kits, please call us and we will get them right out to you. Remember -

Purple label	-	DUI only - alive
Green label	-	dead - no autopsy

STATE DOCUMENTS COLLECTION

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1515 E. 6th AVE.
HELENA, MONTANA 59620

ON CALL SCHEDULE - MONTANA STATE MEDICAL EXAMINER

OCTOBER 1983

275 W. Front Street
Missoula, Montana 59802

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 RON RIVERS
2 RON RIVERS	3	4	5	6	7	8 JOHN PFAFF
9 JOHN PFAFF	10 JOHN PFAFF	11	12	13	14	15 RON RIVERS
16 RON RIVERS	17	18 KEN MUELLER	19 KEN MUELLER	20 KEN MUELLER	21	22 RON RIVERS
RON 23 RIVERS RON RIVERS 30	24 31	25	26	27	28	29 RON RIVERS

Telephone Numbers: State Office - 728-4970
WATS Line - 243-5796

Home Phone: Dr. Ron Rivers- 728-2033 (Home)
(week nights call unless otherwise indicated)

Dr. John Pfaff - Great Falls
Hospital - 727-3333
Home - 727-3905

Dr. Ken Mueller- Billings
Hospital - 657-7000
Home - 248-3024

PLEASE POST

EPILEPTIC DEATHS
OCTOBER 1983
R. L. Rivers, M.D.

"Captain, we arrested her at 0330 this morning for drunk and disorderly. She was extremely combative and cussin' like a blue streak. We put her in isolation at 0349 hours. When Jim checked her at 0403 hours she was just laying there on the floor with that cut over her eye."

"Hmm", said the captain as he bent over the body. "The papers are going to have a field day with this one. Better call the coroner and the doc. We're going to need all the help we can get on this case."

Later, after examining the body in the jail, the coroner said, "Doc and I are sure this lady had a convulsion, Captain. Furthermore, she is an epileptic. We will want to look in her purse and do some toxicology before signing this out."

"Whew", exclaimed the captain. "That sure helps! What about the cut on her head?"

"A wound of innocence.", said the doc.

QUESTIONS:

1) What findings at the scene would indicate a convulsion?

2) What findings at the scene indicate epilepsy?

3) What will the purse and toxicology show?

4) What are wounds of innocence?

5) What causes epilepsy?

6) What is the mechanism of death or immediate cause of death in epileptics?

EPILEPTIC DEATHS
OCTOBER 1983
R. L. Rivers, M.D.

1. There may be bleeding from the mouth as we know many people bite their tongue during a "fit", "seizure" or convulsion. Often the clothing is soiled from urine or feces since many lose control of their bladder or bowels. Finally, bruises or scrapes on the elbows, hands and feet may have occurred while thrashing around during a convulsion.

2. People with convulsive disorders or "epilepsy" must take medication. One particular type of medication, "Dilantin", may cause gingival hyperplasia or a thickening of the gums. The gums become so thick they may even cover the teeth and surgery is required to remove the excess tissue. This condition is so unusual that it is reasonable to assume a person has epilepsy when it is observed in the mouth.

3. The purse may contain medications. Diphenylhydantoin or Dilantin is one of the most frequently prescribed drugs to control convulsions. It is often used along with phenobarbital.

   Unfortunately, many people don't take their medicine as they should. Toxicology may show an absence or a very low amount in the bloodstream. This may explain why a person had a convulsion.

4. "Wounds of innocence" are small cuts, bruises or scrapes on the face, usually over the eyebrows, nose, chin or cheekbones. They occur when a person collapses and hits some object on the floor. They are frequently seen on heart attack victims. These injuries have been mistaken for evidence of foul play, but there is no wrongdoing hence the term "innocence".

5. Convulsive disorders or epilepsy may occur for several reasons.

   1) Old injury to the brain
   2) Tumors and certain diseases
   3) Birth injury
   4) Infections of the brain
   5) Alcoholism
   6) Blood vessel disturbances

   Isolated seizures can occur from fever, poisons, vitamin deficiency and anoxia.

6. People who die during a convulsion have usually had a respiratory arrest. It is referred to as "post-ictal respiratory failure". Post-ictal means "after a seizure".

   Unfortunately many victims of this disease die as a result of drowning in their bathtubs or as the result of a fall.